

Farmer Fred - JULY GARDEN CHORES FOR CENTRAL VALLEY, FOOTHILLS & BAY AREA

- Cut off any dry foliage on spring blooming bulbs such as gladiolas and irises. Divide and replant any crowded clumps.
- Clean up any fallen fruit, vegetables and flowers to help head off future pest problems.
- Looking for colorful additions for shady areas? Try impatiens and begonias, now available at nurseries and garden centers.
- Make the nursery the last shopping stop of the day. Plants left in a hot car can die in as little as 15 minutes.
- Harvest zucchini when the fruit is no more than 8 inches long.
- Potted plants on a hot porch need to be watered thoroughly. Dunk the pot into a bucket of water or slowly water the container with a hose.
- If you use grass clippings as a mulch around trees and shrubs, let them dry out thoroughly to prevent matting and rotting.
- Repot one to two-inch cuttings of coleus and geraniums in small containers for use as indoor potted plants for this winter and as outdoor plants in next year's garden.
- If grasshoppers have stripped any trees or shrubs of their leaves, reduce the plant's stress by watering deeply with a soaker hose around the dripline twice a month during the summer.
- Reduce the chance of sunburn on the bark of leafless trees and shrubs by painting the trunk and stems with white interior latex paint, diluted with water.
- Want to increase the number of summertime flowers or the amount of tomatoes and peppers at harvest time? Use a fertilizer now with more phosphorus and potassium than nitrogen, such as an 8-10-10 formulation.
- Attract ladybugs to help battle aphids in your garden by including these ladybug-attractive plants in your problem areas: dill, golden marguerite, coriander and Queen Anne's lace.

- Looking for houseplants that don't need much care? Try philodendron, the Chinese evergreen or the peperomia. All of these can take low levels of light and only need a thorough watering once a month.
- Dig down a foot and check the soil moisture around stressed shrubs and trees. A handful of this dirt that is either dry or muddy indicates the plant is underwatered or overwatered.
- New research shows the benefits of summertime deciduous fruit tree pruning to keep trees at a manageable height, with the fruit within easy reach. Cut back or remove branches above that height.
- Plant your last section of sweet corn when the crape myrtle is in bloom.
- Press your fingernail into a kernel of corn; if the liquid is milky, not clear, it's ready to eat!